

Testimony of Joseph P. Riley, Jr.
Mayor, City of Charleston
Commerce Committee Hearing
Implementation of the Port and Maritime Security Act
February 19, 2002

One of the lessons we learned from September 11th is that we are vulnerable. Never before have we had to examine our resources in such a way to determine where terrorism can find a weakness. Prior to September 11th, we assumed that our airlines had everything under control, that our skies were safe and that we could respond to any event. Our assumptions have been wrong because we are dealing with an enemy who is cunning, organized, well funded and willing to die in order to destroy us. We must now appraise our resources and consider the risks around us.

One of the vulnerabilities in Charleston is our State Ports Authority. A substantial contributor to our economy and a valuable state and national resource, it is imperative that we take steps to protect this agency and our citizens who rely on this facility and those who live in our area.

The first 6-8 hours following a terrorist incident anywhere in our country are the most critical for the safety of our citizens. This is the very critical period before the arrival of any state or federal resources, so the initial emergency response depends on our local personnel and equipment. Certainly, The City of Charleston stands ready to assist the State Ports Authority with any incident that may happen by making all our resources available to respond for any request for assistance from the SPA, including our HAZ MAT Team headed by Chief Rusty Thomas of the Charleston Fire Department. In addition our Police Department under Chief Greenberg will make available any of their resources including the Maritime Patrol and Swat Team. Local EMS, Fire and/or Police will usually be the first to arrive upon the scene of an incident. It is very important that the spirit of cooperation between local agencies exists in order to bridge the time between the incident and the arrival of federal assistance. It is important to remember that an incident and the response necessary will be overwhelming. The State Ports Authority should keep the City informed of all potential or actual problems.

IMPORTANT ISSUES TO CONSIDER

1. **INITIAL DETECTION**- The initial detection of an incident will occur at the local level by either EMS, Fire , Police or Port Officials. Consequently these first responders need to be trained to identify hazardous agents and take appropriate action. Funding for training of first responders would help to insure identification of a hazard, assessment of the situation and containment of the hazard. We are dealing with new threats and new hazards and the training must be adequate for all possible occurrences.
2. **SECURITY ASSESSMENT**- An assessment of the security of potential targets is of the

utmost importance in planning for a response to an incident. A review of Port to include the docks, and cargo loading/unloading facilities is key in the preparation of a security plan. The identification of foreign vessels and their cargo should be included in this review.

3. **PUBLIC INFORMATION**- Information passed on to the general public in the event of an incident is crucial. Our citizens have proven that they will respond appropriately when they have timely, clear and decisive direction. Providing information about the incident along with instructions on evacuation, traffic restrictions, mass care, sheltering and self-aid will give our residents the information they need to respond and will have a positive effect on the public's perception of the incident and its handling by officials.
4. **SHARED INFORMATION**- Information on potential threats and suspected activities must be shared by organizations involved. While it may not be possible to prevent all incidents the sharing of information can insure that organizations are at their highest state of readiness if necessary. As we have seen, the sharing helps put together the puzzle. One agency may have a piece of information that allows other information to make sense and possibly prevent a tragedy.
5. **MUTUAL AID**- Where at all possible organizations should enter into formal Mutual Aid agreements. This will insure that the local resources that will be stretched from the immediate response during an incident can be supplemented as quickly as possible.

Thank you for the opportunity to express the concerns that we have on the local level. It is important for us all to understand the challenges we have as a result of September 11, 2001.